MARVEL COMICS

#28

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PETER PARKER™ SPIDER-MAN®

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AT A DEMONSTRATION ON RADIATION, HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT PETER PARKER WAS BITTEN BY AN IRRADIATED SPIDER FROM WHICH HE GAINED THE ARACHNID'S INCREDIBLE ABILITIES. WHEN A BURGLAR KILLED HIS BELOVED UNCLE BEN, A GRIEF-STRICKEN PETER VOWED TO USE HIS GREAT POWERS IN THE SERVICE OF HIS FELLOW MAN, BECAUSE HE LEARNED AN INVALUABLE LESSON: WITH GREAT POWER MUST ALSO COME GREAT RESPONSIBILITY. **STAN LEE PRESENTS: PETER PARKER, SPIDER-MAN!**

SOME PEOPLE TAKE THINGS TOO ***SERIOUSLY***, IF YOU ASK ME.

I MEAN, ME, I'VE NEVER BEEN ONE FOR THE DAILY GRIND... I'M MORE OF YOUR ***FREELANCE*** TYPE, EVEN IF IT ***DOES*** PAY PEANUT SHELLS, OF WHICH THE IRS TAKES FIFTY PERCENT.

BUT ***SOME*** PEOPLE... IT'S LIKE THEY'RE MARRIED TO ***MISERY***. THEY HATE THEIR JOBS FROM THE MOMENT THEY FIRST CLOCK IN, BUT FIGURE THEY'LL JUST STICK IT OUT A WHILE UNTIL SOMETHING BETTER COMES ALONG, RIGHT?

ONLY, BEFORE THEY KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED, THERE'S A MORTGAGE AND TWO-POINT-FIVE KIDS AND PLANS FOR A SAILBOAT AND A PENSION PLAN. AND THEY CAN'T GET ***OUT***.

THAT MUST REALLY BE DEPRESSING: TO BE STUCK IN A DEAD-END JOB YOU HATE, TRUDGING THROUGH A LIFE YOU HATE EVEN WORSE. LIVING PAYCHECK TO PAYCHECK WITHOUT THE GUTS TO MOVE ON.

I GUESS THERE'S A MORAL IN THERE SOMEWHERE: YOU HAVE TO LEARN TO DISTANCE YOURSELF FROM YOUR WORK...

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...OTHERWISE IT CAN GET THE *BETTER* OF YOU.

I HAVE BEEN TRYING... TO GET YOUR ATTENTION... SPIDER-MAN... THANK YOU FOR YOUR... PERSEVERANCE. IN A STRANGE WAY... I KNEW I COULD COUNT ON YOU. PLEASE...

...YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME. THOUSANDS OF LIVES... DEPEND ON IT...

FIELD OF DREAM

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SO, D'YOU THINK IT'D BE, LIKE, A REALLY FUNNY JOKE IF I SAID, "WHAT SEEMS TO BE THE PROBLEM?"

I ASSUME YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PYROTECHNICS ACROSS TOWN, STROMM? IN CASE YOU HADN'T HEARD, A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN HURT BY WHAT YOU'RE DOING...

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, SPIDER-MAN... WHERE ONCE I WAS THE ROBOT MASTER... I AM NOW MERELY ITS *SERVANT*...

THIS RECENT UPHEAVAL... THE SURGES IN THE ELECTRICAL GRID -- NONE OF THIS IS MY DOING...

...IT IS THE WORK OF THE *MACHINE*.

I WILL FREELY ADMIT... AFTER OUR PREVIOUS ENCOUNTER... I LEFT WITH A NEW PURPOSE, AND MURDER IN MY HEART.

"I FELT I MUST BRING AN END TO YOUR... INTERFERENCE ONCE AND FOR ALL. THIS ASSUMED SUCH AN IMPORTANCE I LOST SIGHT OF TIME, HONOR... ***PERSPECTIVE.***

"TO THAT END... I REDEDICATED MYSELF TO THE ROBOTS. I WANTED THEM BIGGER, STRONGER... MORE INTELLIGENT.

"I ***TINKERED.***

"I WAS ATTEMPTING TO PERFECT A NEW TECHNIQUE... ONE THAT WOULD ALLOW ME TO CONTROL THE ROBOTS... WITH THE MEREST OF THOUGHTS. MY BRAINWAVES WERE DIRECTLY INTERFACED... WITH THE MAIN COMPUTER THAT CONTROLLED MOST OF MY CREATIONS.

"ONE AFTERNOON, I HAD FALLEN ASLEEP. EXHAUSTED... AT MY WORKBENCH. I AWOKE FROM SLUMBER TO FIND... THE MACHINE HAD WOKEN ALSO. I HAD NOT REALIZED... THAT AS I CREATED A SERVANT IN MY IMAGE...

"...IT WOULD STRIVE TO BE ONE WITH ITS CREATOR.

"IT ***COVETED*** ME."

THE MACHINE HAS BECOME ALIVE, SPIDER-MAN. WITH IT... I SHARE A MEASURE OF CONTROL. BUT THE POWER STRUCTURE IS EPHEMERAL... ILL-DEFINED AT BEST.

FOR THE MOMENT, I AM STRONGER... BUT WITH EVERY PASSING MOMENT, THE MACHINE GAINS INFLUENCE.

SO, WHAT'M I SUPPOSED TO DO? I WAS HOPING TO HAVE BEEN PUNCHING SOMEONE BY NOW.

I KNOW YOU, SPIDER-MAN... DESPITE OUR PAST DIFFERENCES AND YOUR GLIB APPROACH TO MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE... YOU ARE NOT A STUPID MAN.

YOU MUST UNDERSTAND... THE PAIN IS UNBEARABLE. I FEEL THAT I AM... MERE MOMENTS AWAY... FROM BEING OVERWHELMED.

THE MACHINE ATTACKS ME FROM ALL FRONTS... IT GRATES AT MY NERVE ENDINGS. IF I LOSE CONTROL... IT WILL ATTEMPT TO REPRODUCE. AND IN SO DOING... IT WILL OVERRUN THE ENTIRE NETWORK.

THE KEY IS YOU, SPIDER-MAN... IT IS NOW A QUESTION OF CHOICE, AND A GRAVE CHOICE IT IS.

I SUSPECT YOU ALREADY KNOW... THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM:

PLEASE... IF YOU HAVE ANY MERCY INSIDE YOU...

...KILL ME.

PLEASE, GOD... KILL ME NOW.

1/2 PRICE

MM? WHAT DID YOU SAY, HON?

MM? OH, I WAS JUST SAYING I LIKED THE RED ONES BETTER. UH... THAN THE GREEN ONES, I MEAN.

RANDY! YOU SAID YOU LIKED THE GREEN ONES BETTER BEFORE. I THOUGHT YOU ***LIKED*** SPENDING TIME WITH ME --

IT'S NOTHING LIKE THAT, GLORY. I PROMISE. IT'S JUST... I TOLD PETE I'D GO HANG OUT WITH HIM AND WATCH THE KNICKS GAME TONIGHT.

I MEAN, YOU KNOW... HE'S BEEN THROUGH SUCH A TOUGH TIME LATELY, WHAT WITH MARY JANE AND ALL. I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE HE'S OKAY --

RANDY ROBERTSON, MAY GOD STRIKE ME DEAD IF THERE ISN'T ACTUALLY A SWEET, CARING BOY UNDERNEATH THAT PARTY-HOUND EXTERIOR OF YOURS.

AND HERE I WAS THINKING YOU WERE JUST GETTING BORED.

WELL, DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT PETER, HONEYBUN, HE'S ALWAYS BEEN ONE TO DEAL WITH THINGS ON HIS OWN. BESIDES, HE HAS A LOT BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN GO SHOE SHOPPING WITH YOU AN' ME...

1/2 PRICE

NICE TRY, SON.

THERE'S NO WAY I CAN DO IT, STROMM, THAT'S NOT WHO I *AM*.

KILLING PEOPLE, FOR WHATEVER REASON, THAT'S AGAINST THE *RULES*.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE DALAI LAMA... SAYS ABOUT THE RULES, SPIDER-MAN? HE SAYS WE MUST LEARN THEM WELL... SO THAT WE KNOW HOW TO BREAK THEM PROPERLY.

SOME RULES AREN'T *SUPPOSED* TO BE BROKEN. YOU DON'T HAVE THE REGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE THAT I HAVE. YOU NEVER *DID*.

I'M NOT A KILLER.

THEN BE A *SAVIOR* INSTEAD.

ASK YOURSELF... IS A SACRIFICE A SUICIDE? IS IT MURDER WHEN THE ACTION OF MURDER... WILL SAVE A THOUSAND OTHERS?

THE MACHINE IS GOING TO ASSUME CONTROL... IT IS ***INEVITABLE,*** SPIDER-MAN... WHETHER YOU CARE TO ACCEPT IT OR NOT. WHEN THAT HAPPENS...I WILL BE SUBJECTED TO TORTURES UNDREAMED OF FOR AS LONG AS THE MACHINE REMAINS ALIVE.

AND WHAT THEN...? WHAT ABOUT HOSPITAL MACHINERY... AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL... PRISON COMPUTERS...?

READJUST YOUR... PRIORITIES, SPIDER-MAN. RE-EVALUATE YOUR VALUES. A THOUSAND PEOPLE ARE GOING TO DIE... IN THE NAME OF YOUR MORALITY.

ASK YOURSELF IF YOU'RE WILLING... TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEM ***ALL.***

AND SO, AS THE SITUATION WORSENS... KZZZ... AUTHORITIES ARE UNABLE TO EXPLAIN...KZZ

NY

IN FACT, AS... KZZZ... AND THE KZSHH

CLICK

TCH... I NEVER *DID* LIKE THIS CONTRAPTION. YOU CAN'T GET A DECENT RECEPTION NOWADAYS-- I THINK IT'S ALL THESE CHANNELS THEY KEEP ADDING...

HELLO? ARE YOU WITH US, MISTER PARKER? PETER?

PETER, DEAR...?

MM? OH, SORRY, AUNT MAY... I WAS JUST, UH... THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING.

AUNT MAY, I NEED TO ASK YOU A QUESTION, OKAY? I WANT YOU TO BE TOTALLY HONEST WITH ME.

LET'S SAY YOU GOT REALLY SICK ONE DAY. MAYBE IF YOU WERE DYING AND IN A LOT OF PAIN--

I WOULDN'T ASK THAT QUESTION IF I WERE YOU, PETER-- YOU MAY NOT LIKE THE ANSWER.

I CAN DEAL WITH WHATEVER YOU SAY, AUNT MAY-- I PROMISE. I JUST... I REALLY HAVE TO ***KNOW***, OKAY?

-SIGH- I SUPPOSE THIS WAS ALWAYS GOING TO COME UP BETWEEN US ONE OF THESE DAYS. VERY WELL, THEN...

I'M GOING TO TELL YOU A STORY, PETER-- IT'S SOMETHING I'VE NEVER SHARED WITH ANYONE, NOT EVEN YOUR UNCLE BEN. IT MAY NOT ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, BUT PERHAPS THERE IS NO ANSWER.

"IT HAPPENED WHEN I WAS JUST A LITTLE GIRL... I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE THAN FIVE OR SIX YEARS OLD AT THE TIME. I WAS A VERY PENSIVE LITTLE THING... SO QUIET AND SENSITIVE.

"MY FATHER'S OLDER BROTHER, HORACE, HAD BEEN TAKEN DEATHLY ILL.

"I DIDN'T KNOW IT AT THE TIME, BUT HE'D BEEN STRICKEN WITH ***CANCER***. THE FAMILY TRIED TO HIDE IT FROM ME IN CASE IT SCARED ME.

"INTUITIVELY, I WANTED TO COMFORT HIM. I SNUCK INTO HIS ROOM ONE AFTERNOON...

"...UNCLE HORACE HAD ALWAYS BEEN SUCH A KIND MAN -- LARGER THAN LIFE AND AS STRONG AS AN OX. BUT TOWARDS THE END, THE POOR SOUL DIDN'T SEEM LIKE THE SAME PERSON AT ALL..."

M-MAY... IS THAT YOU, CHILD...?

OHH... MAY... IT HURTS...

I'M SO SORRY...

UNCLE HORACE NEEDS TO REST NOW, MAYFLY-- YOU MUSTN'T DISTURB HIM.

COME ON.

WHY'S HE CRYIN', DADDY?

THAT NIGHT, MY UNCLE HORACE TOOK HIS OWN LIFE WITH A REVOLVER.

I LOVED HIM AN AWFUL LOT... THAT HE WAS GONE SO SUDDENLY, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND IT. I THOUGHT HE'D GONE TO VISIT SOMEONE AND THAT HE'D BE BACK THE FOLLOWING WEEK.

"I REMEMBER AFTER THE CORONER LEFT, MY FATHER STOOD OUT ON THE PORCH, ALL ALONE. IT WAS A VERY COLD NIGHT, BUT HE DIDN'T SEEM TO CARE. HE JUST STOOD THERE."

DADDY --

GO BACK INSIDE, MAYFLY.

PLEASE... GO BACK INSIDE...

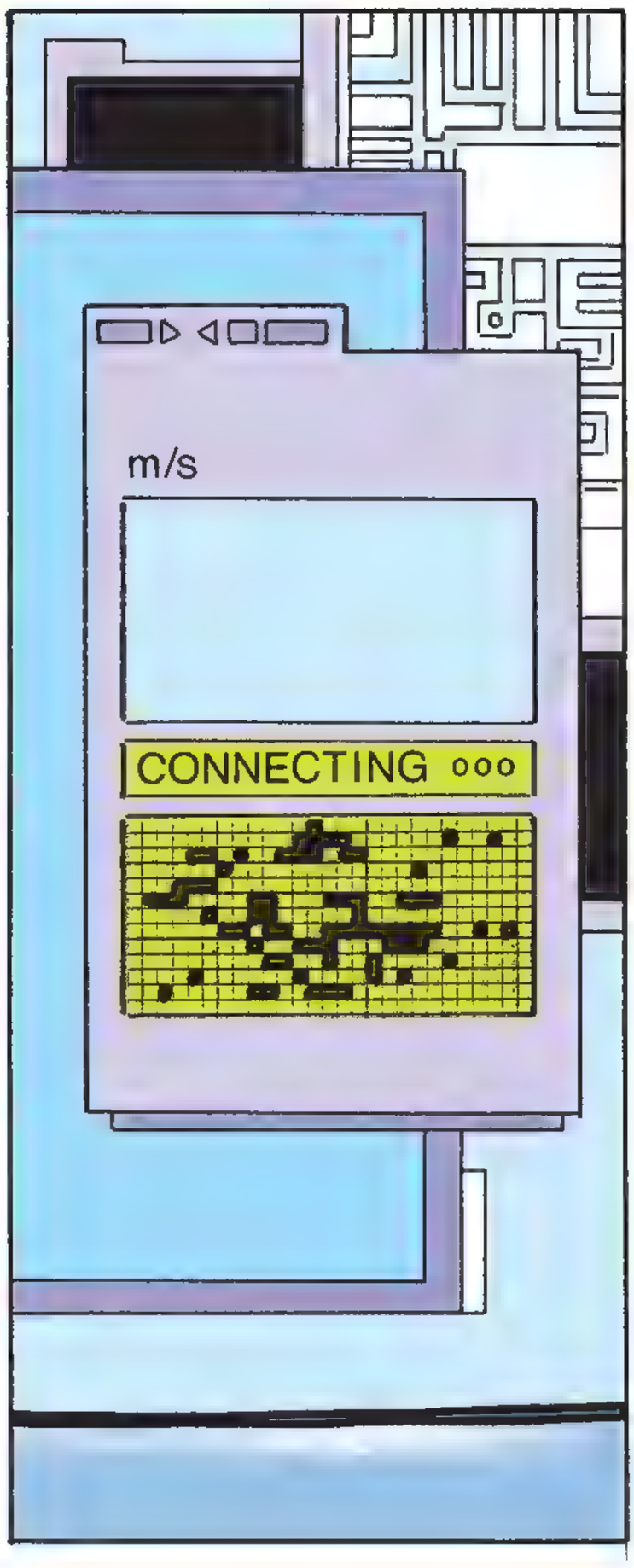
"EVEN THOUGH I WAS SO YOUNG, I KNEW IN MY HEART WHAT MUST HAVE HAPPENED AND I'VE KEPT IT A SECRET UNTIL THIS DAY. YOU SEE, UNCLE HORACE HADN'T ***OWNED*** A REVOLVER."

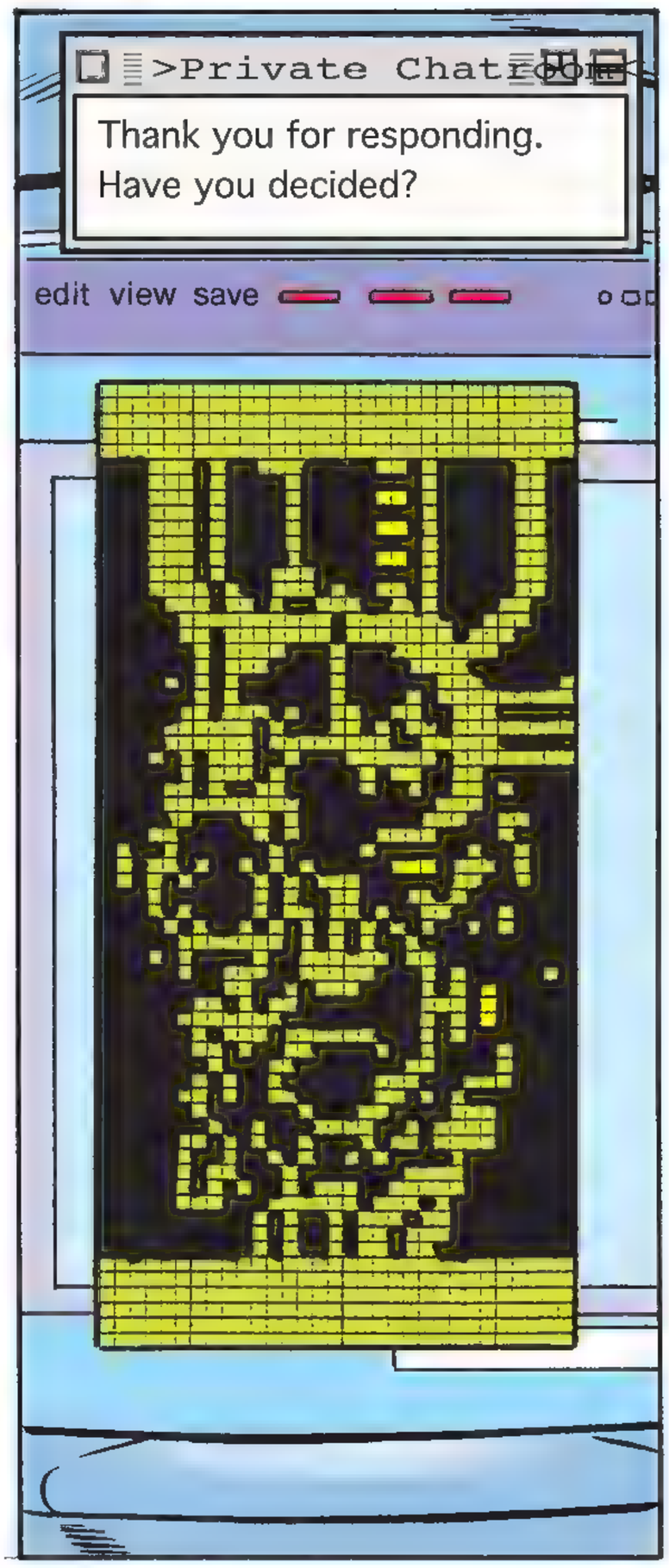
WELL... ->SNFF...<- THAT WAS ALL SUCH A LONG TIME AGO. I'M SURE IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER ANYMORE, DEAR.

GOD, I SWEAR, I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM THIS INTENSE. WHAT D'YOU THINK HE'S UP TO, SHEA?

I DUNNO -- HE JUS' GOT ALL INDUSTRIOUS AND SAID HE WANTED SOME PRIVACY FOR A WHILE.

HE'S PROBABLY IN A CHATROOM CALLIN' HIMSELF "LOVEMONKEY" AND TRYIN' TO PERSUADE SOME INTERNET CHICK HE'S A MERCHANT BANKER...





>Private Chatroom<

Please. The pain is intolerable. Time is of the essence. Have you decided?

Yes.

You are going to help me? As I suggested?

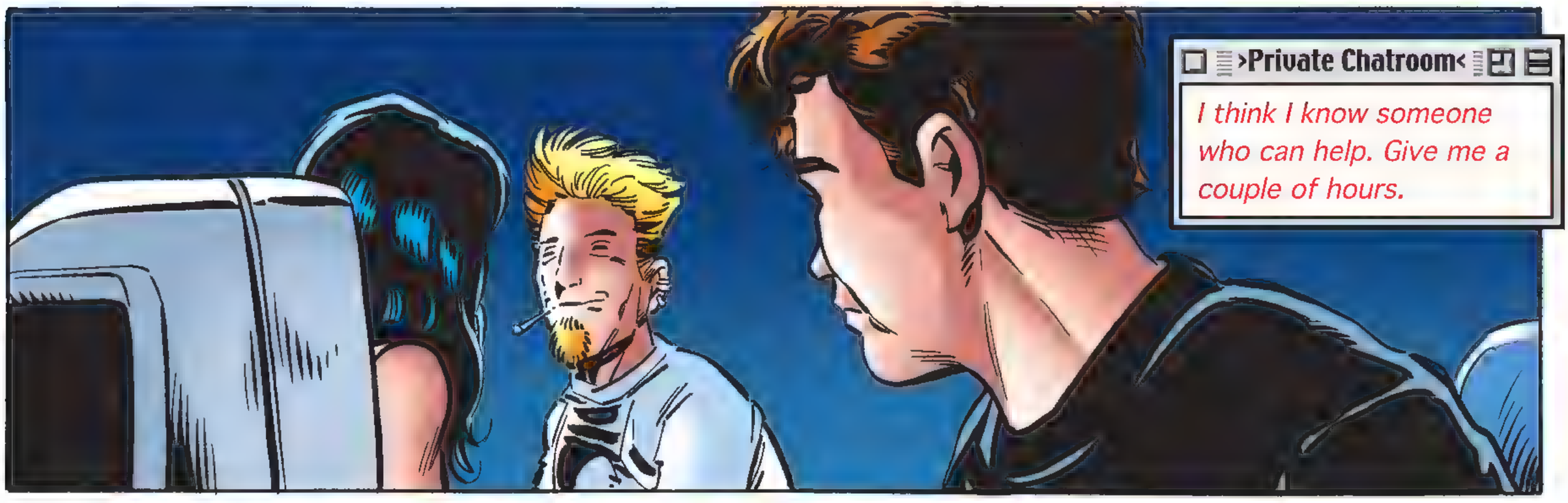
Yes.

Thank you, Spider-Man. Very well, then... let us discuss procedure.

I am currently uploading to your computer a copy of the operating system that my former neural network has now become. You must find a way to introduce a virus into this program and install it back here at the source.

Be advised, the machine will do everything in its power to stop you. It is aware of our communication and is at this very moment attempting to sever the connection between us.

The virus must be capable of utterly wiping the system, thus destroying both myself and the machine. Are you capable of creating such a virus?

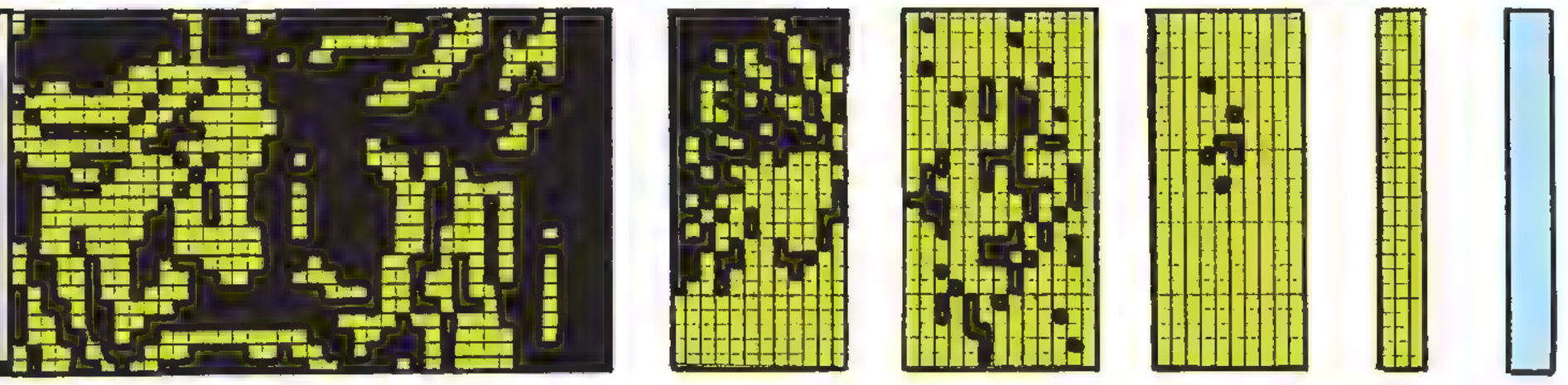


>Private Chatroom<

I think I know someone who can help. Give me a couple of hours.

>Private Chatroom<

I realize this must have been a very difficult decision for you. Thank you for allowing me to die with dignity.



HEY, SHEA! CAN YOU GIVE ME A SECOND OVER HERE?

YOU REMEMBER I ASKED YOU ABOUT COMPUTER OPERATING SYSTEMS? LIKE, IF I GAVE YOU THE PROGRAM, WOULD YOU KNOW HOW TO ***DISABLE*** IT?

MADISON

DUDE, IT'S A LITTLE-KNOWN FACT I INVENTED MOST OPERATING SYSTEMS IN MY FORMER LIFE.

SO, YOU REALLY WANNA TAKE OUT SOMEONE'S HARD DRIVE, HUH? DO MY EARS DECEIVE ME, OR IS *"MISTER CLEAN-CUT"* ABOUT TO COMMIT AN ACT OF CYBER ***TERRORISM?***

YOU KNOW WHAT I ***WANT.*** CAN YOU ***DO*** IT?

YEAH... I MEAN, DON'T TELL ANYONE I SAID THIS, BUT COMPUTER VIRUSES ARE MY SPECIALITY.

WELCOME TO THE WIPEOUT CLUB, MISTER PARKER.

MENDEL 0/5

BY THE TIME I GET BACK TO THE ROBOT MASTER'S RELAY STATION. SOMETHING IS RADICALLY *DIFFERENT* THAN BEFORE.

CALL IT A HUNCH, CALL IT SPIDER-SENSE, CALL IT A HERO'S INTUITION... I DON'T KNOW. I CAN SENSE THE MACHINE ALL AROUND... BUT IT'S LAYING LOW FOR SOME REASON.

INSIDE, EVERYTHING'S QUIETER THAN THE FIRST TIME I CAME HERE -- *TOO* QUIET. THE ARCING ELECTRICITY HAS BEEN REPLACED WITH A QUIET HUMMING...THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NO MOVEMENT.

IT DOESN'T REALLY SMELL LIKE OZONE ANYMORE-- IT SMELLS LIKE TROUBLE. THERE'S DEFINITELY SOMETHING DOWN THERE.

WAITING.

YOO HOO! IT'S ME AGAIN!

UM. OKAY... ANY CRAZED MACHINERY, HOMICIDAL ROBOTS AND/OR PSYCHOTIC CAN OPENERS PLEASE MAKE THEMSELVES KNOWN.

YES? NO? ANYONE?

WELL, NOW. SOMETHING TELLS ME *YOU'RE* NOT THE JANITOR.

WE ARE THE MACHINE... AS ONE WITH THE BEING KNOWN AS MENDEL STROMM.

YOU ARE NOT OF THE MACHINE. YOU ARE SPIDER-MAN.

YOU WILL BE ELIMINATED.

SOMETIMES, I WONDER IF THAT OLD SPIDER-SENSE OF MINE ISN'T REALLY JUST DEJA VU...

DID YOU EVER SEE THAT MOVIE, *"THE FORBIN PROJECT"* WHERE THIS GUY INVENTS THIS COMPUTER THAT TAKES OVER THE ENTIRE WORLD?

SEE, HE DOESN'T REALIZE WHAT HE'S DONE. HE THINKS HIS MACHINE IS GOING TO BENEFIT MANKIND AND IT ENDS UP GOING LOOPY AND TAKING CHARGE.

I *HATED* THAT STUPID MOVIE.

NN-AHHH!

KER RUNCH

...HHH...SORRY TO DISAPPOINT, OLD CHAP... BUT I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR BOSS. CAN YOU FETCH US SOME COFFEE AND DONUTS, THERE'S A GOOD ROBOT...?

NO! YOU ARE DENIED ACCESS! DO NOT PROCEED!

ACCESS DENIED! ACCESS DENIED!

WHOOSH

THERE -- UP AHEAD. WITH ANY LUCK, HE'S STILL IN ONE PIECE...

STROMM? YOU STILL THERE?

MENDEL...?

SPIDER-MAN... PLEASE...)ZZTT(... I FEAR THAT IT IS NOW... OR NEVER...

...I AM OVERCOME... THE PAIN...)ZZTT(... THE MACHINE LIVES...

YEAH, WELL... NOT FOR LONG!

CHUNK

STOP! NO! YOU ARE DENIED ACCESS!

WHAT ARE YOU...

...OOO-OOOO-IIII-NNN-GGG??

I *COULDN'T* DO IT, MENDEL. I MEAN, I BEAT MYSELF UP OVER THIS LIKE YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE. I MUST'VE THOUGHT ABOUT IT A THOUSAND DIFFERENT WAYS...

...BUT IT'S JUST NOT *ME.*

I TOLD MY COMPUTER BUDDY WE WERE PLAYING A PRACTICAL JOKE ON SOMEONE, SO I HAD HIM CREATE SOME KIND OF *LOOP PROGRAM* FOR YOU.

YOU'RE GOING TO BE ON *STANDBY* UNTIL I CAN WORK OUT JUST HOW TO GET YOU OUT OF THIS MESS. AND I WON'T REST UNTIL THAT HAPPENS, OKAY?

I'LL COME BACK FOR YOU, STROMM... I PROMISE.

"IN THE MEANTIME, YOU HAVE A GOOD *SLEEP*, MAN..."

HELLO...?

"IS THERE SOMEONE THERE...?"